

Assessment of the Pottery from Abbots Mews Hotel, York (OSA03 EV02)

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Pottery ranging in date from the Roman period to the 19th century was recovered from an evaluation at Abbots Mews Hotel, York (Site code OSA03 EV02). The Roman pottery indicates some activity from the first century but the majority of the finds are of 3rd and 4th-century date. Most of these are abraded, and some very abraded. There is little evidence, therefore, for the nature of the activity on the site in the Roman period but it was probably a mixture of agriculture and rubbish disposal.

The later pottery sequence starts in the 10th or 11th centuries and the few definitely pre-conquest sherds present are much fresher than those from the Roman period, suggesting that from this period onwards the site was occupied by tenements. The majority of the pottery is of later 12th and early 13th century date. It includes jug sherds with unusual deposits on the inside. These have been interpreted previously as being from the use of these jugs to collect urine, possibly simply so that the user need not face inclement weather but possibly also because urine was used in the treatment of leather.

The few finds of later 13th-century and later date indicate occupation throughout the medieval and later periods. The collection is too small, however, for us to tell whether this occupation was continuous nor whether the range of pottery found indicates any special activity or just domestic occupation.

Description

Roman Pottery by Barbara Precious and Alan Vince

Sixty-two sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered, most of which were small and abraded (Table 1). They were identified and recorded by B Precious. The material spans the Romano-British period. There are sherds of 1st-century samian ware, 2nd/3rd-century coarsewares, 3rd-century colour-coated and coarsewares and 4th-century calcite-gritted wares.

All the classes of Roman pottery were represented. Imported pottery consisted of samian ware of Central Gaulish, Eastern Gaulish and Southern Gaulish origin and of two sherds of amphora, one being a Dressel 20 amphora, the most common type found in Britain, and the other a sherd of Gauloise 4 amphora, from southern Gaul. Ten sherds of local origin were present, grey burnished wares. The majority of sherds are of regional imports, from other parts of *Britannia*. These include wares made north of the Humber, at Crambeck (parchment wares, mortaria and greywares, 6 sherds) and in the vale of Pickering (calcite-gritted wares, 6 sherds), as well as Dorset Black Burnished ware (2 sherds), Dales shelly ware from Lincolnshire (2 sherds), Nene Valley colour-coated wares (6 sherds), and wheelthrown Black Burnished wares (BB2, 3 sherds). Five sherds of unknown but probably British origin were found and 12 sherds of York manufacture (Eboracum ware).

Table 1

Broad source	Narrow cname	Total
Imported	Amphorae	2
	CGS	2
	EGS	2
	SGS	4
Imported Total		10
Local	Grey B.	10
Local Total		10
Regional industries	BB1	2
	BB2	3
	C. gritted	6
	Crambeck	3
	Dales	2
	Mortaria	1
	NVCC	6
	Parchment	2
Regional industries Total		25
Unknown British?	Grey	2
	Misc. oxid	1
	'White'	2
Unknown British? Total		5
York	Ebor	10
	Grey	2
York Total		12
Grand Total		62

This range of wares is indicative of a Romanised occupation with access to far-flung markets. The relative proportions of the various classes is typical of assemblages from York.

Only a small proportion of the sherds could be identified to form level (Table 2). The range of vessel types represented is also typical of Romanised assemblages.

Table 2

Broad Class	Form Code	Sherds
Unidentified		22
Unknown	CLSD	9
Amphora	AP25	1
Amphora	AP27	1
Beakers	K	5
Bowls	BT	2

Broad Class	Form Code	Sherds
Dishes	D	2
Dishes	DF	1
Jars	J	3
Jars	J/K	1
Jars	JC	6
Jars	JC4	1
Jars	JH2	1
Jars	JH3	1
Lids	L	2
Mortaria	M	1
Samian	37	1

Medieval and later Pottery

One hundred and thirty sherds of medieval or later pottery was recovered from the evaluation. These could be assigned to eight different *termini post quem*. However, since some types had a long period of use this is not a perfect guide to the actual date of the pottery or the chronology of activity on the site (Table 1).

Table 3

Cname	10.2	11.1	11.2	12.2	13.2	14.2	16	18.2	Grand Total
TORK?	1								1
TORK	2								2
STAM		1							1
YG			49						49
BEVO				1					1
STAXT				1					1
MTIL				2					2
YSPL				8					8
RED SANDY				11					11
YORK				36					36
BRANDSBY					2				2
DUTR						1			1
WALM						1			1
HUM						8			8
BL							1		1
CSTN							2		2

SWSG?									1	1
TPW									1	1
LPM									3	3
Grand Total	3	1	49	59	2	10	3	5		132

10th to 11th centuries

Three sherds of pottery which probably date from before the Norman conquest were recovered. Two of these are Torksey ware, produced in the Trent valley and traded to York from the late 9th century to the middle of the 11th century. The importation of Torksey ware seems to have received a boost in the middle of the 10th century, probably as a result of the collapse of the local York Anglo-Scandinavian ware industry, and seems to have itself finished suddenly about the time of the conquest. A sherd of an unglazed Stamford ware jar was also present. Such vessels also have a long life but became more common during the 11th century. All three sherds are of moderate size with no evidence for abrasion. They are thus likely to have been used and discarded on site, although it is possible that they were used elsewhere and came onto the site with refuse.

11th to 12th centuries

Forty nine sherds of York Gritty ware (YG) were recovered. This ware was produced from the late 11th century, throughout the 12th century and into the 13th century and at present there is no known difference in fabric or form which can distinguish vessels made in the later 11th century from those made a century and a half later. It is likely, in fact, that the majority of these 49 sherds are of 13th century date, since they occur in context 1005 which produced a large assemblage of pottery of that date.

Later 12th to mid 13th century

Fifty-nine sherds of pottery and two fragments of ceramic building material (presumably flat roof tiles) are of types which first came into use in York in the middle of the 12th century and were then in use until the later 13th century. The earliest of these are splash-glazed vessels with fabrics similar (or identical) to those of YG. These sherds include four fresh sherds from the same vessel, a rod-handled jug from context 1000. They show that occupation was certainly underway on the site by the mid-late 12th century.

The majority of the sherds came from context 1005, for which a deposition date in the early 13th century is likely. The remainder came from various contexts but in no case were more than two sherds of this type present and there is no indication of which part of the period the sherds belong to. An interesting feature of the pottery from this group was the presence of several jug sherds with a light brown deposit on the interior. Such a deposit could be a 'kettle fur' but there is no evidence for sooting on the outside of the jug. Salts can also be deposited on the inside of a vessel if it is used to store water, but only if the water has a high mineral content and the liquid is left to stand for a long period of time. In some cases, it has been suggested that these deposits are the result of the use of the vessel to contain urine. Urinals were used for several purposes in the medieval period. Firstly, uroscopy (studying the colour of urine) was a method of medical diagnosis. Secondly, the vessels could be used in a similar way to chamber pots, for those needing to relieve themselves at night (assuming that they had an external latrine). Thirdly, urine was used in tanning, to break down the subcutaneous fat and hairs. It is important, therefore, for any soil samples from this site to be investigated to see if they contain any evidence for tanning or other unusual activity. The sherds came from two contexts, 1005 and 1018.

Late 13th century to 18th century

Two sherds of Brandsby-type ware were found, both from Trench 2. This ware was first produced in the later 13th century, superseding York Glazed ware and continued to be produced into the late medieval period. Three other wares of late medieval date were present: Humber ware, Low Countries Red Earthenware and Walmgate ware.

Cistercian ware, a black-glazed fineware, was also found. This ware was used in the later 15th and 16th centuries, and overlaps in use with some of the late medieval wares (such as Humber ware and Low

Countries Red earthenware). There are so few sherds present that it is not possible to refine the dating further.

A single sherd of a black-glazed ware is of 16th to 18th century date.

Early modern

Mid 18th century and later pottery consists of a slag-covered sherd of mid late 18th-century white salt-glazed stoneware, possibly the result of being burnt in a coal fire or furnace, the base of a transfer printed whiteware tureen and sherds from three flower pots.

Stratigraphic assessment

Table 2 gives the earliest possible deposition date for the 14 contexts from which pottery was recovered. It is noteworthy that three deposits can be dated to the Roman period (or later) and that all three are 3rd century. Thus, earlier Roman pottery may have come from disturbed deposits of 1st/2nd century date on the site or may have been brought to the site later. Similarly, 4th-century deposits may have been present but are now disturbed. Fourth-century sherds occur in contexts 1001, 1007 and 2010.

Table 4

Context	Trench	Description
1000	1	LMED plus one EMOD
1001	1	12 TH C
1003	1	L11/E13
1005	1	E13th C
1006	1	Late 3 rd century
1007	1	12 TH C
1008	1	3 rd Century
1009	1	3 rd Century
1018	1	L12th C/E13th C
2002	2	EMOD
2003	2	16 TH C
2005	2	L14th C
2006	2	EMOD
2010	2	16THC

Further work

Two sherds of Romano-British pottery are of types which require illustration (contexts 2006 and 2010).

Appendix One. Roman Pottery

context	cname	form	dec	nov	refid	alter	description	join	nosh	weight
1000B2	JC	LA					BS		1	2
1000B2	JC						BS		1	5
1000B3	BT?	BHL				ABR	BS		1	27
1000C1A	K					ABR	BS		1	6
1000G1	J						BS		1	15
1000G1	J						BASE 100% STRING		1	74
1000K2?							BS		1	3
1000ZDATE							CP3			
1000ZZZ							UNSTRAT			
1001C1A	CLSD						BS DRIP MARKS INT		1	6
1001E2							BS		1	9
1001G2	JBL					ABR	BS THICK		1	8
1001P0						ABR	BS MICACEOUS		1	2
1001P2	BFL	PB				ABR	RIM UPPER WALL		1	9
1001ZDATE							CP4B			
1003E1	CLSD						BS		1	4
1003P0	CLSD						BS			
1003ZDATE							CP2-3+			
1005AP25	AP25					VABR	BS LFAB		1	57
1005B14						VABR	BS		1	2

context	cname	form	dec	nov	refid	alter	description	join	nosh	weight
1005B16	BT					ABR	RIM SHORT NECK		1	24
1005B16	BT						BS		1	6
1005C3	K						BS		1	2
1005CBM?						VABR	FLAKE		1	13
1005E1	L						RIM		1	2
1005E8	CLSD						BS		1	2
1005S1						VABR	FLAKE		1	1
1005S1?						ABR	FLAKE; PROB 1005		1	1
1005S4		37					BS BASAL GOOD FREE DESIGN		1	38
1005ZDATE							CP3B			
1005ZZZ							MIX;1C SAM			
1006B1	JC4	BHL					RIM SHLDR		1	16
1006B12	J/K						BS		1	1
1006B3	JC	LO?				ABR	BS		1	6
1006CBM?						ABR	FRAG		1	4
1006S3	BD					VABR	FLAKE		1	1
1006ZDATE							CP3B			
1007B16	BT?					ABR	BS		1	15
1007B3	JC	LA					BS THIN WALL		1	1
1007B3	JC	LML					BS		1	7
1007CBM?						ABR BURNT	FRAG		1	4
1007E1						VABR	BS		1	3

context	cname	form	dec	nov	refid	alter	description	join	nosh	weight
1007E8		CLSD					BS		1	11
1007H1		CLSD					BS		1	4
1007K1		J				ABR	BS		1	4
1007K1		JH2					RIM		1	11
1007K1		JH3					RIM		1	11
1007M1		M				ABR	BS		1	6
1007ZDATE							CP4B			
1008AP27		AP27				VABR	BS		1	2
1008B11?		CLSD					BS		1	12
1008B14		BD					BASE INT SCORED CIRCLE		1	14
1008C3		K	BA?			VABR	BS		1	1
1008E1						VABR	BSS		2	9
1008H1		JD					RIM		1	2
1008K2?							BS		1	3
1008O0							BS GREY CORE		1	8
1008S1			18			VABR	RIM FLAKE		1	1
1008S1						VABR	FLAKE		1	1
1008S3		D					BS TRIMED COUNTER <*>		1	3
1008ZDATE							CP3			
1008ZZZ							MIX; 1C SAM			
1009B3		BT?					RIM FRAG		1	12
1009E1		CLSD					BS W FE		1	3

context	cname	form	dec	nov	refid	alter	description	join	nosh	weight
1009E1						VABR	FLAKE		1	1
1009ZDATE							CP3			
1018C2	K						BS LFAB		1	2
1018ZDATE							CP3B+			
2002C3	K						BS LFAB		1	7
2002G0	CLSD					ABR	BS BURNT ?MPOT		1	4
2002ZDATE							CP3B+			
2006B1?	JC					SOOT	BS		1	11
2006B2	D						BASE CHAMFER		1	40
2006K1	L				D1		RIM		1	12
2006ZDATE							CP3B+			
2010B11?	DF				D2		RIM LWR WALL FAB CF CRAMBECK		1	200
2010ZDATE							CP4-4B			
2010ZZZ							FAB GRY NOT WHITE; COARSER			

Appendix Two. Post-Roman pottery

Context	Trench	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Part	Use	Condition
1000	1	BEVO	MODERATE CALC + QUARTZ SAND	JAR	1	1	22		BS		FRESH
1000	1	HUM		JAR	1	1	29		B	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1000	1	HUM		JUG	2	1	132	CONICAL FORM;WHITE SLIPPED EXT	B		FRESH
1000	1	TPW		TUREEN	1	1	39		B		
1000	1	WALM		JAR	1	1	56	INT BROWN GLAZE;EXT KT	B	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1000	1	YG		BOWL	1	1	15		BS		FRESH
1000	1	YG		JAR	3	3	69		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1000	1	YG	MORE LIKE DURC	JAR	1	1	0		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1000	1	YG		JAR	1	1	22		B	SOOTED EXT;DEPO INT	FRESH
1000	1	YORK		JAR	1	1	19		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1000	1	YSPL		JUG	4	1	271	ROD HANDLE	R		FRESH
1000	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	LMED plus one EMOD	BS		
1001	1	TORK		JAR	1	1	23		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1001	1	YG		JAR	2	2	58		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1001	1	YSPL		PTCH	1	1	7		BS		FRESH
1001	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	12TH C	BS		
1003	1	YG		JAR	1	1	8		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1003	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	L11/E13	BS		
1005	1	MTIL		FLAT	1	1	8		BS		ABR
1005	1	RED SANDY		JUG	10	10	79		BS		
1005	1	STAM		JAR	1	1	5		BS		
1005	1	STAXT	ROUNDED CHALK, BEVERLEY AREA?	JAR	1	1	53		R		

Context	Trench	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Part	Use	Condition
1005	1	TORK		JAR	1	1	15		BS	SOOTED EXT;KETTLE FUR INT	
1005	1	TORK?		JAR	1	1	4		BS	SOOTED EXT;DEPO INT	
1005	1	YG		JAR	11	11	78		BS		
1005	1	YG		JAR	1	1	12	SQUARED RIM	R		
1005	1	YG		JAR	1	1	29	FLAT-TOPPED RIM;GLOB BODY	R		
1005	1	YG		JAR	1	1	11		B	SOOTED EXT;DEPO INT	
1005	1	YG		JAR	1	1	13		B	SOOTED EXT	
1005	1	YG		JAR	16	16	171		BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	1	YORK		BOWL	1	1	97	CUGL INT AND EXT	B	SOOTED INT	
1005	1	YORK		JAR	4	4	43		BS	SOOTED EXT	
1005	1	YORK		JAR	1	1	127		B	SOOTED EXT;KETTLE FUR INT	
1005	1	YORK		JAR	1	1	98	CUGL SPOTS EXT	B	SOOTED EXT	
1005	1	YORK		JAR	7	7	88		BS		
1005	1	YORK		JUG	14	14	154	CUGL EXT	BS		
1005	1	YORK		JUG	1	1	7	CUGL EXT;VERT APPLIED THUMBED STRIP	BS		
1005	1	YORK		JUG	1	1	96	CUGL EXT	BS	INT DEPO	
1005	1	YSPL		JUG	1	1	6	WAVY COMBING;CU? GL	BS		
1006	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	ROMAN	BS		
1007	1	YG	CF DURC	JAR	2	1	8		BS		
1007	1	YG		JAR	3	3	11		BS	SOOTED EXT	
1007	1	YG		JAR	1	1	17		B	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1007	1	YORK		JAR	1	1	7		BS	SOOTED EXT	FRESH
1007	1	YSPL		JUG	2	2	28		BS		FRESH
1007	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	12TH C	BS		

Context	Trench	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Part	Use	Condition
1008	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	ROMAN	BS		
1009	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	ROMAN	BS		
1018	1	YG		JAR	1	1	3		BS		
1018	1	YORK		JUG	1	1	20		R	INT DEPO	FRESH
1018	1	ZDATE			0	0	0	L12TH/E13TH C	BS		
2002	2	BRANDSBY		JUG	1	1	15		BS		FRESH
2002	2	HUM		BOWL/DISH	1	1	10	INT BROWN GL	B		
2002	2	HUM		JAR	1	1	1	INT GLAZE	BS		
2002	2	HUM		JUG/JAR	1	1	12	THUMBED HORIZ STRIP	BS		FRESH
2002	2	LPM		FLP	3	3	26		BS		
2002	2	RED SANDY	M RQ SOME MATT SURFACED	JAR/JUG	1	1	9		BS		
2002	2	YORK		JAR	1	1	15	WASTER?	BS		GLAZE OVER EDGES
2002	2	ZDATE			0	0	0	EMOD	BS		
2003	2	BL		JAR	1	1	25	THICK BLACK GLAZE DRIBBLES INT	BS		
2003	2	BRANDSBY	BLACK INT MARGINS	JUG	1	1	0	CUGL EXT	BS		
2003	2	CSTN	ANGULAR FINE-GRAINED WHITE SST FRAG >3.0MM	CUP	1	1	3		R		
2003	2	DUTR		CAUL	1	1	19		H		
2003	2	MTIL		FLAT?	1	1	2		BS		
2003	2	ZDATE			0	0	0	16TH C	BS		
2005	2	HUM		JUG/JAR	1	1	3		BS		
2005	2	YG		JAR	1	1	12		R		
2005	2	YORK		JUG	1	1	6	CUGL INT AND EXT	BS		ABR
2005	2	ZDATE			0	0	0	L14TH +	BS		

Context	Trench	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Part	Use	Condition
2006	2	HUM		JUG/JAR	1	1	14	THICK BROWN GL;APPLIED THUMBED HORIZ STRIP	BS		
2006	2	SWSG?		TANK	1	1	19		R		COVERED IN SLAG
2006	2	YG	CF DURC	JAR	1	1	8		BS		
2006	2	YORK		JUG	1	1	54	APPLIED BRIDGE SPOUT;CUGL	S		
2006	2	ZDATE			0	0	0	EMOD	BS		
2010	2	CSTN	NO VISIBLE INCLUSIONS	CUP	1	1	6		BS		FRESH
2010	2	ZDATE			0	0	0	16THC	BS		